

Bahrain End GCC Handball Campaign in Style



Bahrain's handball stars and national football goalkeeper Ebrahim Lutfalla support the team from the stands

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national handball team concluded their GCC Games campaign yesterday with a 31-20 win over the UAE at Duhail Handball Sports Hall. Under Swedish head coach Robert Hedin, Bahrain entered the match already assured of the gold medal following their victory over Qatar. Nevertheless, still delivered a perfect finish to the tournament, going unbeaten and winning every match to cap off a dominant campaign.

The result adds to an impres-

sive period for Bahraini handball. Earlier this year, Bahrain claimed their first-ever Asian title at the 2026 AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship in Kuwait, a triumph that also secured qualification for the 2027 IHF World Men's Handball Championship in Germany. Prior to that, the national team also claimed gold at the Islamic Solidarity Games last November, marking another historic milestone.

Against the UAE, Bahrain rotated their squad after sealing the title but still controlled the tempo from the outset. Jassim Khamis opened the scoring in

the second minute, setting the tone for an early Bahraini lead. The UAE briefly found rhythm, though a disallowed goal for stepping on the six-metre line halted their momentum.

Bahrain gradually pulled away, with Jaffar Farsan and Salman Fadhel helping establish a 15-10 advantage by half-time. Their structured attack and defensive discipline limited the UAE's opportunities, ensuring control even with a rotated lineup.

The second half followed a similar pattern. Mohamed Rabia finished a well-worked move to extend the lead before Ali Mo-



Action from the match

ammed added further separation to make it 26-16. As the game opened up, Ahmed Fadhel struck twice in quick succession, first after a flowing team sequence and then again to push the score to 31-19. The UAE added a late consolation, but Bahrain remained firmly in control until the final whistle.

Youth player Ahmed Hussain also featured after Bahrain had

already secured the title, marking an important milestone in his early international career. Speaking after his debut, he said: "Every time Bahrain steps onto the court, the objective is to win. That mentality is constant, regardless of the occasion. The senior players have been incredibly supportive, and I am grateful to be part of this team."

He added: "Making my debut



Coach Robert Hedin looks on from the sidelines

and winning gold at the same tournament is a moment I will always remember."

His teammate Ahmed Al Fardan also reflected on the campaign, saying: "Alhamdulillah, we went unbeaten and won every match. It has been a strong and rewarding campaign for the team."

At Last in Saudi Arabia: Ronaldo Captures Title with Al Nassr

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Cristiano Ronaldo became a champion in Saudi Arabia yesterday as Al Nassr secured the Saudi Pro League title after a dramatic final matchday that brought pressure, but ultimately ended in celebration and relief. The Riyadh-based club produced a crucial victory to lift the trophy for the first time since 2019, ending a season defined by scrutiny and high expectations.

For Ronaldo, the title carries significant weight. Since joining Al Nassr, he has faced constant criticism for the lack of major silverware. Only days earlier, the club suffered disappointment in the AFC Champions League Two final against Gamba Osaka, adding further pressure on both the team and their star forward.

The night began with nerves running high. A draw would have handed the title to Al Hilal, meaning Al Nassr could not afford any mistakes. The tension was evident early on, but Sadio Mané broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute with a header from a Joao Felix corner to lift the atmosphere inside the stadium.

Al Nassr doubled their advantage in the second half when



Al Nassr celebrate their 11th Saudi Pro League title

Kingsley Coman unleashed a powerful long-range strike, set up by Abdullah Al Khaibari, putting the hosts within reach of the title.

However, Damac pulled one back just six minutes later from the penalty spot through Morlaye Sylla, briefly shifting momentum and raising anxiety at Al Awwal Park. At the same time,

Al Hilal were winning their own fixture, keeping the title race on a knife edge.

With everything still at stake, Cristiano Ronaldo delivered when it mattered most. In the 62nd minute, he scored a free kick from the left side of the attacking third that found its way through a crowded area and into the bottom corner, a crucial

strike that restored control for Al Nassr.

Ronaldo struck again in the 80th minute to complete his brace, finishing from the right side of the six-yard box with a right-footed effort into the top right corner. That second goal, his 973rd career strike, effectively sealed the title as Al Nassr went on to win 4-1 against

Damac.

With the final whistle, Al Nassr secured a long-awaited league title and Ronaldo added another major honour to his extraordinary career. It is his first league championship in Saudi Arabia and ends a five-year drought without a domestic league crown.

The victory also represents



Cristiano Ronaldo poses with the Roshn Saudi League trophy

a personal turning point. Ronaldo arrived in Saudi football amid questions about his motivation and the level of competition. Once again, he answered through performance and goals on the pitch.

Looking ahead, the Portuguese star now turns his attention to the 2026 FIFA World Cup with Portugal, where he will aim to crown his career with the one major international trophy that still eludes him.

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